

***Moringa peregrina* (Forssk.) Fiori**
Moringaceae



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Photo by K. H. Batanouny

■ Morphological Description

Deciduous tree, 3-10 m high, green, glaucous with erect trunk, and white bark. Leaves are 30 cm long, the axes persistent, imparipinnate with early deciduous leaflets. Each leaf is formed of 3 pairs of long, slender junciform pinnae looking like opposite virgate branches. Leaflets are remote, small, oblong. Flowers appear before leaves in May. The pendulous pods ripen in October. The pod is pendulous and contains angled, nut-like white seeds (behen nuts) which are of bitter sweet taste and rich in oil (ben oil). Flowering and fruiting: February-April.

■ Geographical Distribution

Local: Sinai, South Eastern Desert, Red Sea Region and Gebel Elba.

Regional: No records in other North African Countries.

Global: Ethiopia to Somalia, Northwards to the Sudan and Eastwards to Arabia. Also recorded from Palestine and Jordan.

■ Ecology

The plant grows in Sinai and the Red Sea Zone on steep rocky slopes and precipitous cliffs of the mountains. The plant is confined to the base of mountains that are higher than 1300-1500 m above sea level.

■ Status

The plant is vulnerable.

Moringa peregrina (Forssk) Fiori,

Agr. Colon.; 5:59 (1911); *Hyperathera peregrina* Forssk, F1. Aegypt. Arab.; *Moringa aptera* Gaertner, Fruct. Sem. P1.2:315 (1775).

Names

Arabic: Habb Elyasar حب اليسار , Habba ghalia حبة غالية ,baan awayr حب البان , bayreh, terfaal, yayn.

English: Wild drumstick tree, Ben-oil tree, Ben nut (seed), Moringa.

French : Ben blanc, Moringe aptere, Arbre noix de ben..

■ Part(s) Used

Seeds and oil obtained from seeds.

■ Collection

The leaves and flowering tops are collected when the plant is in late flowering stage.

■ Preparations

Infusion, tincture, capsule and cream.

■ Use

Oral.

■ Constituents

The seed oil of *Moringa peregrina* contains a high level of oleic (70.5%), followed by gadoleic (1.5%), while the dominant saturated acids were palmitic (8.9%) and stearic (3.82%). α -g-and d-tocopherols were also detected. B-sitosterol was found as the most predominant component of the sterolic fraction of the oil. Campesterol, stigmasterol, brassicas-terol and cholesterol were also found.

■ Pharmacological Action and Toxicity

The seed oil contains almost all the fatty acids that are also found in olive oil. Moringa wood is reported to be resistant to termites and is therefore popular as a building material.

■ Pharmacopoeia

Not available

■ Phytopharmaceutical Products

Not available

■ Traditional Medicine and Indigenous Knowledge

History: Moringa was well known in the ancient world, but only recently has been "rediscovered" as a multipurpose tree with a wide variety of potential uses. The pleasant-tasting edible oil, which can be extracted from the seeds, was highly valued by the ancient Roman, Greek and Egyptian civilizations for use in making perfume and in protecting skin. The ben oil has been used by the Egyptians since Old and Middle Kingdoms (3000-2000 BC).

■ Traditional Medicinal Uses

- Analgesic
- Abdominal pain
- Burns
- Constipation
- Febrifuge
- Laxative
- Headache

Other Uses of the Plant: The bark of the *Moringa peregrina* tree was used to remove

freckles. The wood is seen as a good source for fire-wood and charcoal.

■ References

General References

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